



Are you living in a respectful relationship?

The relationship that you have with your partner is an important part of your life; the stability that it provides contributes to your emotional and physical wellbeing.

Respectful relationships are based on trust, honesty, fairness, and equality. In a respectful relationship you can be honest with yourself and with your partner. You bring out the best in each other, trust each other's decisions, and know that your partner accepts that the best person you can be is the person you are! Being in a respectful relationship is fun and makes you feel good about yourself.

In a respectful relationship:

- You don't have to do everything together; it's healthy to have different interests and opinions
- You're prepared to compromise. Sharing decision-making is fair and equal
- You can be honest with each other while respecting your partner's opinions and feelings
- You trust one another, going out with your own friends (male or female) is okay
- You have your own support team, working together and helping each other toward your individual and shared goals
- You accept that there are good times in a relationship and times when you need to be tolerant and accepting of your partner's differences
- You are able to communicate your thoughts and feelings



A survey conducted in the Mackay and Bowen Basin regions of Central Queensland showed almost one third of the 532 women surveyed had experienced some type of non-physical abuse. Women experiencing non-physical abuse were 3.6 times more likely to suffer from depression and 5.2 times more likely to experience severe psychological symptoms (Nancarrow, Lockie & Sharma, 2009).

A relationship where:

- You are constantly trying to please your partner to avoid conflict
- Your partner's disrespect of you is copied by your children
- You're made to feel that your opinions aren't as important as your partner's
- Your partner blames their use of alcohol or drugs on your behaviour
- You feel that you are unsafe
- Your partner demands to know who you are with and where you are at all times
- Your partner is jealous and does not want you to talk to other men
- Your partner limits or prevents your contact with family or friends
- You are pressured to have sex or made to feel guilty if you don't
- Your partner denies you the right to practise your spiritual beliefs or misuses spiritual traditions to justify abusive behaviour
- Your partner talks about your private intimate relationship publicly
- Your partner puts you down or humiliates you privately or publicly
- Your partner controls the money and only gives you what he thinks you need

...is not a respectful relationship

“Research demonstrates that non-physical abuse can be just as devastating, if not more devastating than the long term effects of physical abuse”
(McKinnon, 2008).

Jealous, controlling behaviour that limits your social interaction is not an expression of love - it's abuse.

What effect can a relationship that is not respectful have on your life:

- Poor sleep habits
- Nausea or headaches
- Depression or anxiety
- Low self confidence or esteem
- Change in eating habits (over or under-eating)
- Neglect of general health needs (eye sight, teeth) due to partner restricting finances
- Lack of trust in friends and family
- Abuse of drugs and alcohol

Depression, anxiety, confusion, low self-esteem and chronic health problems may all be symptoms of emotional or psychological abuse (McKinnon, 2008).

What you should know if you are in a relationship that is not respectful:

- You are not alone; there is a range of confidential services that you can contact to discuss your relationship (see over)
- Physical violence is one form of abuse that you may find in an unhealthy relationship, but psychological, financial, verbal, social, economic, sexual and spiritual abuse are equally harmful
- There is no excuse for any type of abuse
- Verbal and psychological abuse may change to physical abuse over time
- It takes courage to seek help

Whilst more than half of the women who experienced non physical abuse in the Mackay and Bowen Basin study knew about free, confidential support services in their locality, only 23% sought help (Nancarrow, Lockie & Sharma, 2009). There is a number of services available that know about the full range of abusive behaviours. They are there to listen and support you, not to make decisions for you or judge you.



Find your closest domestic violence support service

A list of domestic violence services in Queensland is available at:

qlddomesticviolencelink.org.au

or, if you do not have access to the Internet:

Call Womensline, DVConnect's 24 hour domestic violence telephone service on 1800 811 811.

References:

Nancarrow H, Lockie S & Sharma S. 2009 'Intimate partner abuse of women in a Central Queensland mining region', Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice. No. 378, Australian Institute of Criminology.

McKinnon L. 2008 'Hurting Without Hitting: non physical contact forms of abuse', Stakeholder Paper 4, Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney.



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